

April 19, 2001

To: NITC Commissioners

From: Anne Byers

Subject: Telehealth Feasibility Study

The University of Nebraska Medical Center's Center for Rural Health Research recently conducted a study on the potential uses of and needs for telehealth services in Nebraska for the Nebraska Information Technology Commission. The study, *Assessment of Potential Uses of and Needs for Telehealth Services in Rural Nebraska*, found that continuing medical education, mental health services, and teleradiology are the applications with the greatest potential in Nebraska. The report also recommends the use of telemedicine for follow-up care.

The report also identified several other benefits of telemedicine:

- Physicians and patients benefit from joint participation by in consultative sessions.
- Patient care remains in the local community.
- Patients are more likely to make and keep appointments for care.

The report concluded with the following recommendations:

1. Initial applications of telehealth must be responsive to the needs of providers.
2. Any new program should aim to include interactive video.
3. Health professionals currently using telehealth services should be champions of those applications.
4. There should be formal training for everyone involved in telehealth consultations.
5. Advocates for telehealth must continue to press for changes in reimbursement policies.
6. Programs in telehealth should incorporate broad-based community participation by including applications of interest to community groups.

The report is available at <http://www.unmc.edu/rural/documents/pr01-1.pdf>.

The Telehealth Subcommittee is currently developing action items to address the report's recommendations.